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ABSTRACT

This report describes a special, 1-year federally funded project of the Oklahoma State Department of Education and the Oklahoma City Public schools, which operated to facilitate the transition of neglected or delinquent youths from state operated institutions to locally operated educational programs. The problems specific to youths in transition from Oklahoma's six state institutions for the neglected or delinquent are detailed in the first section, along with a discussion of the planning phase of the program, characteristics of the target population, and the objectives of the project. A description of the operation of the program is presented focusing on: special program features; site, personnel, and participant selection; the extent of program services; and participant training. The results of the program are discussed in relation to participation count, dropouts, attendance, achievement, attitudes and goals, cost, and slippage. Conclusions about the effectiveness of the program and recommendations to potential practitioners working with the same clientele complete the document. (BL)

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ED245139

FINAL REPORT

Neglected or Delinquent Transition Services in Oklahoma

1982-83

A collaborative delinquency re-entry prevention program

between the Oklahoma State Department of Education

and

the Oklahoma City Public Schools, District I-89

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Project Completed September 30, 1983

CG 017509

Report submitted by

Oklahoma State Department of Education

Dr. Leslie Fisher, State Superintendent of Public Instruction

LESLIE FISHER
State Superintendent of Public Instruction
President and Executive Officer, State Board of Education

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Dr. James L. Casey, Administrator
Planning, Research and Evaluation Section

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NEGLECTED OR DELINQUENT TRANSITION SERVICES IN OKLAHOMA

The Issue

Opportunity

During the 1983 Fiscal Year the Oklahoma State Department of Education was awarded a special one-year project under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. This project provided funds to facilitate the transition of neglected or delinquent youth from State-operated institutions into locally-operated educational programs.

Although this program had been authorized by Congress since 1978, it was not funded until 1982. Being a qualified applicant, the Oklahoma State Department of Education prepared a proposal, applied for a grant, and was notified in late August, 1982 that the application had been granted.

Problem

Oklahoma, too, along with most other states had a problem that this program was designed to alleviate. Six State institutions for the neglected and delinquent were established in the State. Approximately 2,200 youth passed through these institutions in the span of a year with about 475 under maintenance at any one time. Since the average length of stay was six months, that meant an average of 144 were returning to their communities each month.

Although the problem cases were scattered statewide, there was the usual concentration in urban areas. Oklahoma County had an average monthly caseload of 353.4 children on probation, parole, or institutionalized. An average of 14 children were discharged from custody per month. In spite of involvements in employment, education, program planning, and training, an average of 5.6% were recommitted each month.

Other pertinent characteristics noted were that 80% were male, 60% were from divorced parents and living with the mother, 54% were under age 16, but 86% were not receiving AFDC benefits. In fact only 17% reported the parent or parents as being unemployed except that 12% did not give a response to this item in the survey.

Educational status also showed need, although 70% were enrolled in regular or unspecified classes. For 5% of the juveniles, the last grade attended was elementary. A grade in junior high school was the last grade attended by 45%, while 33% said 10th grade was the last one for them. Sixty-eight percent had had attendance problems. In addition they had impulsive personalities (78%), social identity problems (73%), conduct disorders (60%), social skills deficiencies (53%), aggressive tendencies (27%) and assaultive behavior (17%) which compounded the educational efforts.

Their educational level was also relevant. Only 20% were recorded scoring above 100 on the verbal I.Q., but 42% scored above 100 on the performance I.Q.

From input of school and social counselors and community youth workers they further verified program need. These students needed individual counseling (92%), an adolescent model group (87%), basic life skills (72%), employment skills (65%), recreation opportunities (58%), and a group-involved parent. Most of the community contacts added, though, that the most serious need was an educational program. Educators responded that support from parents or guardians and commitment on the part of the student was the most likely avenue to success given the fact that an educational program has always been available. They cited the high dropout rate as a symptom of the need.

These facets of the problem brought on the statement of need. The

four parts to the statement were:

(1) An educational program which would build upon the individual counseling and rehabilitative services that the students have received.

(2) An educational program which would generate self-directed educational commitment.

(3) An educational program which would provide social identity and responsibility through social skill practice.

(4) An educational program for parent/guardian involvement which will build family support for directing future family behavior.

Planning

From the point of the need statement and in conjunction with its identification, joint efforts were made between personnel in the Oklahoma City schools, which had a majority of the target students in the area, and personnel of the State Department of Education to develop a program to meet the expressed needs.

Mr. David Nunn of the Oklahoma City system had extensive background in counseling neglected and delinquent youth and experience in the affairs of the court system, particularly the juvenile court system. He also had been responsible for coordinating community service agencies in meeting needs of students. His contacts in the system led to others who helped formulate the approach.

Dr. James L. Casey of the State Department of Education had extensive experience in dropout identification and prevention programs with background in the legal aspects of the problem.

Planning evolved around determining relationships between the two proposing agencies and the other agencies in the community which needed to be contacted to work in the project. Considerable time was spent on trying to localize or center the project in an area of most relative need, but it was concluded that almost any area of the city would be suitable and would have sufficient target students to participate.

Formulation of the project called for a human service person working in coordination with the school personnel as an advocate for the student, to work with the student in a counseling role, and work with parents in training.

For the State level, the project needed a liaison between agencies functioning at different levels and with different responsibilities. Because affairs had not been working as desired between these agencies, it was felt this kind of liaison would be of great benefit.

Management of administrative details of the project was performed by Mr. Nunn and Dr. Casey at their respective institutions. Fiscal affairs would be operated in the normal procedures of each institution and according to governmental policy.

Target Population

Of course, the Federal Statute under which the funds were granted for this project specified the target population, i.e. students returning from State neglected or delinquent institutions. But once they reached the community, they went their various ways. Some were involved in employment, some were still in process, some in education, some in more specific training, but others were doing nothing productive.

The intent of this project was to reach the inactive and to influence those who were involved in planning their future to complete their education.

Estimates were made that possibly 80 students might be able to enroll in the program. However, based upon the number of children discharged from custody each month and the percentage of inactives, a number of 25 to 28 would have covered the ones who were not already involved in some kind of work, education, or training.

Sources for referrals of students were the juvenile court system and the community youth counselor system. Contact with them would facilitate the mainstreaming of the returning students and prohibit excessive breaks in their education.

In addition to the student clientele, teachers and parents were also targets for this project. Teachers were to participate in inservice training oriented to this kind of student and the special techniques involved in peer tutoring, classroom management, resource development, goals directed learning, conferencing, and integration of learning. Parents would have meetings set up for them also to begin working with and helping each other.

Objective

All the above factors contributed to the objective for the program. In general form the objective was that given the opportunity of a re-entry program, up to 80 students would improve their staying power in school and exercise more responsibility for their own education. Progress would be evaluated through records of school program attendance and ratings of progress made on selected goals of the students.

Special Features

Special features and components of this project include the fact that the grantee had no full time staff assigned to it. Full time staff were provided in the subcontract however, i.e. one counselor - human resource person and one clerk. The half time coordinator and clerk at the State Department were sufficient to achieve the objectives at that level. The subcontract with the Oklahoma City Public Schools provided a situation in which instructional staff were already provided by the district which would allow the project purposes to be met.

Activity for students was concentrated in an alternative school, an adjunct to a vocational school district. This unique feature allowed students to get the academic courses and vocational courses they might need all at the same site.

A third special feature dealt with the interpersonal operations. Conferencing between student, parent, and teacher brought the problems into focus for all parties. Special classroom support training of students even included "rap" sessions which helped students to focus on their responsibilities. Small classes so that teacher and student could more profitably work together were provided. Teacher training, project staff training, and parent training heightened the awareness and skill level of all participants.

Featured also in the project was State Education coordination of agency efforts at the state level. This feature helped clear some hurdles for the benefit of the student and those persons at the local level who were trying to help them.

Site Selection

Because this project did not begin until October, by which time teachers had been hired, classes established, and space assigned, planning for its

implementation was somewhat constrained. But the time was right, for Oklahoma City Public School District I-89 and Vocational Technical District 22 had established a cooperative effort in the form of an alternative school.

On the same site as the Vocational Technical District facilities, several portable buildings were moved in to provide space for academic classrooms, meeting rooms, and offices. This arrangement allowed students to take basic skill subjects and vocational subjects in a highly cooperative fashion yet not interfere with each school's particular function.

Since after establishing classes, there was still space in the portables for offices and meeting rooms, the planners decided to headquarter the Oklahoma City Public Schools' portion of the project at that location.

Besides the site convenience, the program was very compatible with the purposes of the Neglected or Delinquent Project, and this allowed the project to spend more of its funds in concentration on the counselor - human resource function. The students had, for all practical purposes, the same basic characteristics. The project students had only spent a little more time in a different system.

This available opportunity had been dubbed the SAGE Alternative Program. SAGE stood for Skills and Academic Grant Education, one of several different alternatives open to Oklahoma City Public School students.

Selection of Personnel

Upon notification of funding, the director of the project, Dr. James L. Casey, notified officials of the Oklahoma City Public Schools. A meeting was set in which operational details of the project could be discussed. This meeting had in attendance Dr. Jesse Lindley, Assistant Superintendent for Educational Services; Mr. Jack Ish, Administrative Assistant; Dr. Betty Mason, Director of Secondary Education; Mr. Vernon Moore, Director of Middle

and Fifth Year Centers; Mr. Jim Johnson, Director of Special Services; Mr. Gene Steiger, Director of Special Projects; Mr. Don Price, Director of External Funding; and Mr. David Nunn, the co-developer of the project. All of the above were officials with the City System. Dr. Casey presented the project from the State Department of Education.

One of the participants made the comment that they knew someone who would exactly fit the job of coordinating the local effort. It turned out that several others were thinking of the same person. That person was Sandra Vallejo.

A look at Sandra's experience confirmed the assumption. Her bachelor's degree was in social work and psychology. After graduation she went to work for the Oklahoma State Department of Public Welfare as a caseworker in the Aid for Families with Dependent Children Program. From there she went to the Guthrie Job Corps to serve as a resident counselor. She then worked for the Oklahoma City Public Schools as an attendance counselor. Her next assignment was as an elementary school counselor for the Department of Defense School in Frankfurt, Germany. Back in the States, she took time out for a masters' degree in institutional counseling. Her first opportunity to use the masters came as a social worker for the Associated Catholic Social Services, St. Joseph's Childrens' Home, and, after three years there, moved on to become Associate Director, State of New Mexico Health Department, Crippled Children's Services. But Oklahoma City called her back in the Summer of 1977, and she became program monitor for the City's Human Resource Department, Monitoring and Evaluation Division evaluating programs for approximately 1200 economically disadvantaged youth. Oklahoma City Public Schools needed a director for their Comprehensive Employment and Training Act programs in 1978 which is the job immediately preceding this. As someone said, "They couldn't have found a better one!"

Donna G. Murray was transferred within the City system to this project to handle the conference scheduling, budgeting, and other training related tasks.

At the announcement of funding the Oklahoma State Department of Education began searching for an appropriate coordinator since the possible candidates mentioned in the proposal had either transferred, left the Department, or had picked up some other tasks that would preclude giving enough attention to the project. Who should appear to look for a position than a native son with just the right kind of experience, Dr. C. D. Jones, Jr.

Having graduated from Oklahoma City Public Schools; receiving a bachelor's and a master's degree in education, special education, and psychology; and having been a psychology trainee at the University of Missouri School of Medicine for a couple of years, Jones was well qualified to be a psychologist in the Oklahoma City Public Schools. He then transferred to the Oklahoma State Department of Education to become Assistant State Director of Special Instruction and Training, a post he held for three years. When a critical need appeared in a program for disadvantaged youth he became the Interim Executive Director and Deputy Executive Director for an Oklahoma City industrial education and training center. Before coming back to Oklahoma he had spent eleven years employed by the Education Commission of the States as a national level project manager. In the meantime he had stopped at the University of Oklahoma in 1976 to get a Doctorate of Philosophy in behavioral sciences.

Dr. Jones also worked part time in the Human Relations Section, a unit of the Department whose functions closely parallel the purpose of this project.

The secretary hired to coordinate the clerical work of the project at the State level was Lisa Branson, who also worked part time in the Planning, Research, and Evaluation Section (SEA), the unit that prepared the proposal.

Other personnel included Deborah Ealy, SAGE Program Administrative Assistant, Cedric Cudjoe, SAGE Counselor, Andy Dement, Director of the Adult Training Center, and the four teachers involved in the program who were funded by local budgets.

Selection of Participants

The SAGE Alternative Program was designed to offer a second chance to students who were failing traditional high school due primarily to chronically poor attendance. The initial target population included dropouts and potential dropouts. Curriculum was oriented to the tenth through twelfth grade levels, the years of traditionally high dropout. It also closely met the needs of students who desired to enter the world of work with the best mechanical skills training offered by the district. The addition of adjudicated delinquents or neglected students returning to the Oklahoma City Public Schools from state institutions posed no problem for the other students, teachers, or curriculum.

SAGE had been organized to serve 200 students. However, because of limited available spaces in the academic and vocational program and the small, family sized staff, the number 150 was agreed upon as being more feasible. This reduction was compounded by adding the neglected and delinquent, but not restrictively so. The SAGE program served a total of 264 students during the year. Maximum enrollment at any one time was 162 with an average of 145.

After hiring staff and getting them oriented, the next task was to obtain a list of prospective students. This proved to be more difficult than we at first realized. No list was available. In Oklahoma the Bureau

of Institutional and Community Services for Children and Youth provides court related contacts, refers children and youth to the various programs, and maintains data and information on transition students. Our initial requests were met with rebuff. It seemed that the Privacy Rights Act was interpreted to disallow our usage of the list.

Not to be denied, the local project coordinator contacted every high school counselor in the City System and asked them to send her names of enrollees who had been recently discharged from a State N or D Institution. Our contacts with the Court Related Community Services (CRCS) counselors had assured me that they took every transition student by the hand and personally escorted them to the local high school.

The list was pitifully small. One reason was that the CRCS counselors serve the total county. While Oklahoma City Public Schools I-89, serves the largest population, there are 21 other districts in the county. We also found an attitude present in a few youth workers that the schools were responsible for the delinquency of the students in the first place. We assumed this was an interpretation of that youth worker's own experience with the schools, and that individual had entered youth work to save the innocent victim from the devastation insidiously perpetrated by the schools. We believe, and are hopeful, that our brief contacts in this program have alleviated some of that kind of feeling.

In the meantime our State liaison staff member worked on the problem which eventually led to a meeting in the Capitol building with Human Services and CRCS staff, State Health Department staff (this agency has youth guidance centers), State Department of Education staff, Oklahoma City Public Schools staff, and members of the Legislature and Attorney General's office and their staff. A spirit of cooperation ensued. Legislators became aware of some problems that needed future legislation. Others became aware that

"need to know" still operated even with the Privacy Rights Act. Others found out that they were not alone in their efforts to help the target students.

Subsequent to a second visit with the Bureau of Institutional and Community Services for Children and Youth, the local project coordinator was able to get periodic lists of transition students for the county. These lists began to be available in January and were processed through the City System's computer to see if the students were enrolled in the Oklahoma City Public Schools. These students were then contacted or at least called by the Transition Service Program (TSP) staff. Initial contact results were:

Attending high school - 38 (some were already attending SAGE via the counselor's lists)

Interested in GED preparation - 3

Wrong telephone numbers - 8

Disconnected telephone numbers - 5

Not enrolled in OCPS or could not be located - 58

To be contacted later - 2

The TSP coordinator followed up on as many of these contacts as possible. She continued to keep in contact with the ten Comprehensive High School administrators and counselors who could also refer students to the TSP and SAGE program. Because of the kind of students enrolled in the program and the nature of the curriculum, students were also enrolled by special approval and recommendation of the Director of High School/Adult Education Office. This office kept a special list of the transition qualified students. Not all eligible transition students enrolled in the SAGE program. The TSP coordinator in working with the counselor, student, and parents found that some would profit more from a regular program or some other alternative and

were so enrolled, but their parents could still participate in the TSP parent sessions.

Of the 114 total identified transition students 49 had no release date issued by the referral source. Sixty-five had release dates, the majority of which were in the fall to winter of 1982.

Extent of Services - Starting/Stopping

Although the project began on October 1, 1982, and the SAGE program was already under way the TSP portion did not get active until the TSP coordinator got on board and the list of students was generated. From that point on, beginning was a matter among TSP coordinator, the student, and the SAGE staff.

Sometimes days of the coordinator's time were spent just to locate potential students. Then a few minutes or hours were spent helping the student decide on the options. If a student qualified and opted for SAGE/TSP he/she was further involved in guidance sessions and other activities. For all students, the involvement time ranged from their contact with the coordinator after their release from the state institution to the end of the school year.

Students opting for SAGE/TSP were enrolled full time. The vocational district provided buses which would pick up students in their neighborhoods and return them at the day's end. Convenience for the student was hard to match.

The tragic fact about beginning and ending is that some students ended again without making the kind of progress they were capable of making. Thirty-eight of the 114 identified students did participate in the SAGE/TSP. Of this 38, 27 were still with the program at the end of the school year.

SAGE was designed as a three year program. Since TSP was in conjunction with SAGE and conducted ongoing counseling and training sessions, there was no reason for the student to stop participating in TSP until he/she graduated from SAGE or until the program terminated. But a few students chose other alternatives and self terminated.

Students by choice could remain in the program through graduation. They would graduate with the Emerson Alternative School graduating class. Credits for graduation were the same as at all the other schools. Credits received were based on seat hours earned in each subject area: (1) a minimum of 70 hours (actual time spent in class) was required for each hour of credit in an academic class and, (2) a minimum of 210 hours was required in the skill area.

From SAGE as a whole 150 of the 264 enrollees withdrew at some point during the year, for a variety of causes (employment, moving, truancy, suspension, health, incarceration, transfer, and dropout). But SAGE reported that many of those withdrawn students did return. 114 students remained at SAGE and 181 overall are attending school who previously were not attending.

Extent of Services - Direct and Coordinated

The State Department's component consisted of overall supervision and project administration with liaison at the state agency and state institution level. This function cleared the way to allow local educators to make contacts with officials responsible for intake and release procedures. Students returning from state institutions thus were contacted about school participation much earlier than before.

Coordinator for the State was highly involved in the affairs of the meeting with all concerned agencies, legislators, and the state legal officials. Also, in the process of working with the regular Title I N & D program personnel, the project became involved in a monitoring visit by

U. S. Department of Education officials. This gave an opportunity to have a combined meeting with representatives from all the State N & D institutions. Subsequent visits at their sites helped facilitate the work of the project.

Already mentioned was the visit to the Bureau of Institutional and Community Services, in which both coordinators played an important part. The administrator was elated with their accomplishments.

The state coordinator also sat with the local coordinator on a SAGE/TSP Advisory Committee. The other parties on this committee from the Oklahoma City Public Schools were:

Dr. Charlotte Biff-Harrison, Coordinator of Staff Development

Dr. Lessie LeSure, Coordinator, School Intervention Program

Ms. Myrna Dubose, Chapter I Coordinator

Ms. Ann Crocker, Attendance Monitor

Ms. Villa Rae Carter, Counseling Director

Important to the concept of the program was the creation of a positive caring environment that would serve to renew the students' interest in attending school and making decisions that would benefit their future and the school and community. The development of various clubs (DECCA, FBLA, Newspaper staff) and the student government council provided a greater sense of responsibility and belonging for the students. The small student and staff population promoted a sense of individuality and closeness among the staff and students that went beyond the direct instruction they received.

TSP coordinator services were generally less direct than instruction but in other ways more direct. Generally the coordinator:

1. Helped students returning to the district from state institutions to enroll in the SAGE/TSP or in any other suitable regular or alternative program.

2. Worked with students, parents, and staff to improve student attendance, achievement, and relationships.
3. Contacted juvenile officers and other court-related personnel, to help place students in appropriate environments.
4. Provided individual and small group counseling and guidance for TSP students.
5. Planned and coordinated training activities for teachers, counselors, students, and parents.
6. Planned and coordinated parent advisory sessions.
7. Planned out-of-school experiences for students, which involved job related field trips to business and industry within the community.

The program adhered to the policies of all other Oklahoma City Public Schools in regard to the importance of curriculum, discipline and dress code.

Extent of Services - Kind

The local coordinator spent a considerable amount of time doing social work counseling: telephone calls, address checking, visiting potential participants and their parents and guardians, working with local juvenile court systems, cooperating with community group home officials, counseling students, working with parents, and providing extra educational opportunities.

SAGE/TSP students were given a choice to become skilled in one or two of the following areas: (1) Auto mechanic, (2) Welding, (3) General Office, (4) Machine Shop, and (5) Carpentry/Carpentry Theory. Five basic skill teachers were employed by OCPS to teach Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, and General Science.

Certificated teachers were used in both the vocational and academic programs. The instructional program was individualized to allow for positive and successful learning mastery. Flexible scheduling, special programs and services, individual and group counseling sessions, inservice training, and both theoretical and "hands on" experiences were other highlights of the program.

Students were enrolled in the program spending 2½ days in the skill area and 2½ days in the academic area. This allowed more continuity of tasks in both programs. However, some special adaptations were made to coordinate vocational skill training with academic skill classes to better meet the needs of the students.

No cafeteria services were available, but students and staff did have snack areas with vending machines which served the food needs.

TSP also provided some job related field trips for the students. The coordinator identified and contacted 60 businesses for trip possibilities, for career awareness programs, and possible visits. Examples of some of the places toured are the Health Sciences Center, the Oklahoma County Blood Institute, General Motors, and Oklahoma Publishing Company.

Another feature of this program was its extension of services to parents. Parents were brought in to help plan the kind of services they needed.

An advisory committee of TSP parents was established. Members included: Mrs. Charlene Harris, Mr. and Mrs. William Dawkins, Mrs. Bowles, Mr. Carlos Billings, Mrs. Gloria Grayson, Mr. Garvin Murphy, Mrs. Betty Cassidy, and Mrs. Joyce Edwards. Parents met for training and to help themselves become stronger in leading their families.

Training

Training for all participants was designed to meet some of their special needs, yet coordinated so work for all parties could progress congruently. The staff had a training planning session on October 20th. A comment by the administrative assistant is appropriate here. She said, "The idea of selecting topics of similar correlation to be introduced to the students and staff concurrently is a very excellent idea. This method will allow for uniformity."

One of the first training sessions with parents was with a consultant, Dr. Sally Cole, whose theme was based on the accepted fact that being the parent of a teenager is not an easy job, and who provided a workshop of down-to-earth tips for parents that can help make the job easier. Other sessions followed. Regular parent meetings were held in November, December, February, March and May. The meetings were held during the evening and during the day. Although the meetings were scheduled primarily for TSP parents, other SAGE parents and staff were allowed to attend. Letters were mailed to parents a week in advance of the meeting, then telephoned a few days before the meeting to encourage attendance.

Three staff sessions were held in November to facilitate progress of TSP students. These sessions dealt with methods and techniques for raising the self concept of students and methods and techniques to enhance cross cultural relationships.

Training coordination was also accomplished for students. During November students spent five whole days on the same kind of things the teachers were pursuing: developing awareness of self as related to school life and promoting self responsibility as a vital skill in life.

A consultant from the Drug Rehabilitation Unit of Central State Hospital (Institution) conducted sessions on drug abuse assisted by several rehabilitated abusers. The TSP response was overwhelming. These drug abuse information sessions were also provided to participants at the Department of Human Services Youth Services Day Treatment Program. This was another group of Transition youth found by the coordinator.

Monthly sessions were held for all participants as well as individual counseling. Parents' responses to the meetings were very positive. In addition to meetings already mentioned, other media were used to disseminate an awareness of the problem. State Human Relations workshops, for example, were used to tell about the project.

THE RESULTS

Participation Count

Results projected for the Transition Service Project included reduction in dropout, increased attendance, achievement growth, and improved attitudes and goals.

Of the 114 students who were on the list received from the Bureau of Institutions and Community Services for Children and Youth, 55 were found in the Oklahoma City Public Schools' area. Contact with these 55 resulted in the following:

Went to school elsewhere		2
Other identified interests		5
Interested in getting GED (referred)		5
Not interested in school		10
Work	5	
Returned to Inst.	2	
Incarcerated	2	
Just not interested	1	
Enrolled in SAGE/TSP		33

Dropouts

Long term dropout prevention could not be investigated in this project, but some promising results seemed to appear. Be reminded though that an alternative school itself is based on research concerning dropouts and is a well accepted dropout preventive.

TSP had 33 students to work with, of this 33, and after the project concluded, the coordinator found that 2 had gone to work, 2 had moved out of the city, and 2 had been reinstitutionalized. This left a total of 27 still in the project at the year's end.

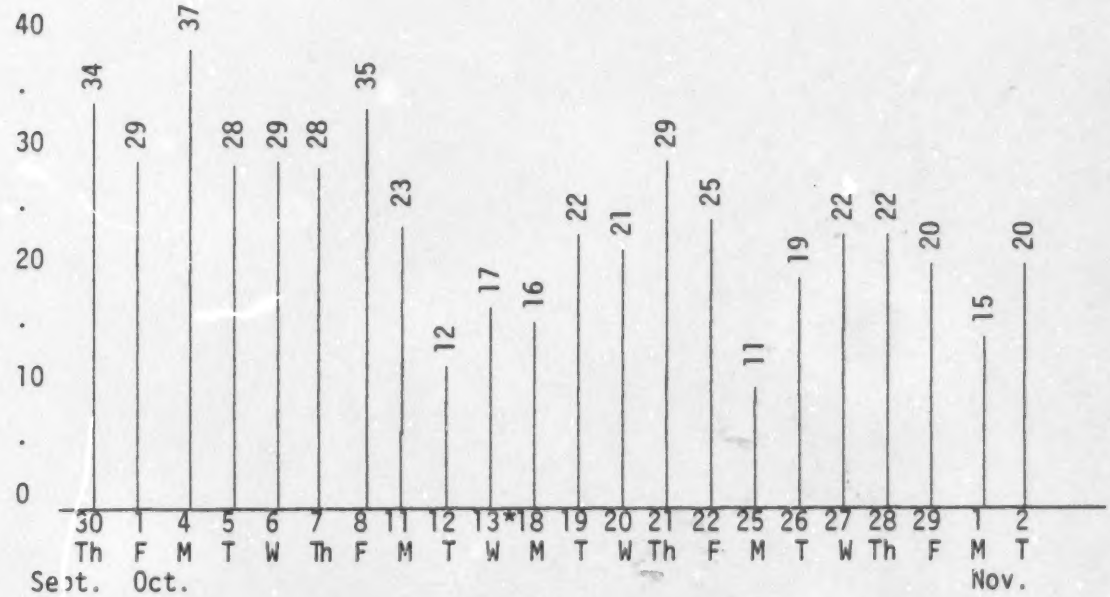
Comparing this retained number with the initial 33 results in a retention rate of 81%. For the SAGE project as a whole 114 remained at the end of the year of the 264 enrollees. That percentage is 43%.

Although the comparison looks favorable to TSP there may be other factors operating to account for the difference. However, dropouts were reduced below expectations for both programs.

Attendance

By being in the program, as indicated in the dropout figures above, the student naturally improves his overall attendance. The TSP staff maintained daily attendance records on the students in coordination with SAGE. Efforts were made to contact the parents of each student reported absent before noon of the same day. The overall daily attendance averaged 75% which was comparable with attendance in other Oklahoma City High Schools. This attendance rate was exceptionally high considering the previous truancy pattern of most of the SAGE students. The following chart is revealing of the absentee preventive effect of TSP.

ABSENTEE PERCENTAGE
SAGE/TSP 1982



*14, 15 Teachers' Meeting

Remember that the TSP project was not active until after October 1, 1982.

A narrative report of the SAGE administrator stated that the attendance of SAGE/TSP students improved as much as 85% in most instances.

Achievement

Over 91% of the students' grades in the SAGE/TSP improved as much as one letter grade over their previous grade from their home school.

Twenty seven students in TSP participated long enough to get grades in their language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Fifteen had a grade point average of above 2.0 (these are grade points with 4.0 being an "A"). Eleven fell below 2.0. One student's average score was above 3.0.

Again, the high rate of those staying in the program may have been partially promoted by the success the students were having with their academic curriculum. Students who have dropped out before, feel little hesitancy to do it again if they feel threatened or unsuccessful. Sixty-nine percent of SAGE/TSP students were planning on returning in the fall.

Attitudes and Goals

The students' responses to questions on attitudes and goals, along with their dramatic improvement on grades and attendance, are quite indicative of students who are experiencing a renewed interest in school and in taking an active part in its activities. The students also seemed to display more self-pride and pride in their surroundings. These comments were the kind that came from the staff that worked with the students each day. The staff had worked with the same kind of students in other school settings, but felt different with these. They grouped together differently, seemed friendlier, more purposeful, and less destructive or malicious.

Student goals after the SAGE/TSP experience were interesting. College after high school was the aim of 17%. Fifty-four percent wanted to go right to work (they felt the vocational training had made them ready). Nine percent wanted to go into the military. Some of these had been rebuffed before

because they had not completed school. Twelve percent wanted more vocational schooling. Only eight percent were unsure of what they wanted to do, or were married and had thereby reached their goal already.

These futures were different from the initial survey for only 27% of the students. Seventy-one percent of them said their new choice or sticking to the previous choice was a direct result of participation in the SAGE/TSP.

Other items appeared:

74% said the courses were leading them toward their career goals.

100% had talked to the counselor.

56% had discussed their graduation requirements and future plans with the counselor.

74% felt their self-worth, pride, and consideration and respect for others had improved. Fourteen percent didn't know, and eleven percent flatly said, "No."

97% would recommend this project to other students looking for alternatives from comprehensive high schools.

87.5% said their attendance approved from their previous school.

93.8% said their grades improved from their previous school.

Math was the subject they liked least, but gave no explanation of why. Surprisingly they enjoyed English, but that was behind History and Carpentry.

The greatest responses to what they considered good about the program were:

Teachers set rules

Staff cares

Rules are strict

Staff easy to talk to

Staff attitude

Attitude of students

To improve, they wanted more students with attitudes like theirs in the SAGE/TSP, more courses (variety), more recreation opportunities, and more field trips (principally the job related kind).

Cost

There are several ways to look at costs. To be cost effective the costs should be related to results or project. Education and social services, however, do not lend themselves well to the industrial model of cost benefits.

Excluding State costs and calculating only the federal expenditures, we find the total cost for this project to be $61,576. Dividing by the number of students we find the following:

1. For 114 potential clients identified, the per client cost would be $540.14.
2. By number of contacted students, 55, the per contactee cost would be $1,119.56. It must be remembered here that some of these were counseled and referred to other programs.
3. By number who spent any amount of time with the program, 38, the per student cost was $1,620.42.
4. For the students who stayed in the program to the end, 27, the per student cost was $2,280.59.

The Oklahoma City District during the same period was budgeted to spend an average of $2,470.30 per student in average daily attendance or $2,299.67 from only State and local funds. It was costing the State Institution approximately $145 per day for each resident student.

In Oklahoma it took, during the same period, over $13,000 to house and care for a prison inmate. That was the logical future for some of the students in this program. At that figure, if the program has kept only 5 away from that kind of future, the balance sheet would be in the black at once.

If only one had been so deterred it would only take 5 years to balance the books and begin returning societal productivity.

If the 27 who completed the project stay just out of poverty, they will repay the governmental investment in them within three years. Then they will have a lifetime of contributing to the economy rather than draining it.

In these viewpoints of cost, the benefits seem to win, and when that happens, the costs have not been too high.

Slippage

Although the project did produce positive results, it did not directly serve all the 80 students projected.

Reasons for that slippage are probably more than we can enumerate, but here are a few:

1. Difference in service areas of Court Related Community Youth Services and the public schools. (i.e. county, city, district)
2. Restrictive interpretation of Privacy Rights Act.
3. Lack of data flow between equally responsible agencies.
4. Closing of two State delinquency institutions before the project began: Taft South Facility - Feb. 15, 1980; Helena - April 1, 1982.
5. Closing of two more State delinquency institutions during the project: Whitaker - Feb. 28, 1983; Boley - July 1, 1983.
6. Shift in procedure by the courts to referring delinquents to group homes in the urban area rather than State institutions.
7. Lack of proper knowledge about education of group home residents by supervisors. (They thought they were providing the experiences the students needed, but the students were not earning usable credit in the process.)

8. Lack of enough parental involvement by more parents.
9. Omission of record keeping on all returned students other than those enrolled in the target alternative school. Many were served in group homes and other service centers by the coordinator, but were not recorded.
10. Not having enough lead time to plan the program to coincide with the beginning of the school year.
11. Unresolved differences in philosophies and policies of different cooperating agencies.

Work in the project helped resolve some of the slippage areas. At the State agency levels there is much freer cooperation. Many of the group homes have a better awareness of the educational requirements. Counselors, parole officers, and supervisors have broadened perspective of the options available to returning students and to those who are receiving the benefit of newer procedures for disposing of their cases before they have to be sent to a State institution.

As to degree of success in the face of the small amount of slippage, we can say that we are glad we didn't reach so many since it is an indication that the previous problems were beginning to be solved by the local cooperating agencies before it got to such a serious level as before. Keeping the students at the local level prevents more serious disruptions in their lives (such as educational interruption) that caused more problems which were more expensive to resolve.

THE CONCLUSIONS

From the results of this Neglected or Delinquent Transition Program, it can be concluded that the project was effective. Furthermore, drawing upon the results and extending them into advice for potential practitioners dealing in the same area of clientele, the following conclusions may be drawn:

1. An alternative school concentrating on basics and job training on a half and half schedule can be an effective educational retention tool.
2. State to local and local to local agency communication and data sharing can be accomplished while still recognizing privacy and turf.
3. Helping students take responsibility for their own actions produces results.
4. An enthusiastic ombudsperson is needed to assist with the many problems these kinds of students have.
5. When a total staff is working with the same kinds of problems and has similar background and training the problems lessen.
6. Training of students and staff in the same topic areas produces more compatible learning.
7. Changing the credit time to a "seat-hour" basis helps all kinds of students make the transition better.
8. Awareness and a high degree of cooperation are necessary to the success of transition service programs.
9. These special population type of programs cost more, but for the results communities should expect it and be willing to pay. It is an investment.

Although this was a one year program, it was agreed by all participants that it should be continued and expanded as funds may be made available. The alternative school will still be available in the Oklahoma City Public School District. The number of returning students has diminished, but counselors will still be referring students with the same kind of potential and problems into the existing alternatives that became apparent to them in this project.